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Museum of State Historical Society wins national award

PIERRE, S.D. -- The Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society is the recipient of an Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Leadership in History Awards for the exhibit *Our South Dakota: Big Land/Big Ideas/Big Heart*.

The AASLH Leadership in History Awards program, now in its 67th year, is the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.

Our South Dakota: Big Land /Big Ideas /Big Heart opened at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre in October 2011. The exhibit creates a whimsical and fun environment for informally learning all about the state. Four major themes – comparisons, landscapes, big ideas and community – run throughout the exhibition.

Geared to appeal to a K-6th grade audience and families, *Our South Dakota* features many hands-on activities:

- Visitors can draw themselves into an animal wall to see how they measure up to a mammoth, bison and prairie dog.
- They can sit in a combine cab and “harvest” corn.
- A community picnic table invites visitors to share a card game.
- Ten-foot photographs show off the variety and beauty of South Dakota’s landscapes.
- Visitors can handle pelts, feathers, and claws from the animals that make those landscapes their home.

“This exhibit is visually exciting as well as offering terrific hands-on experiences in an environment that is fun for all ages,” said Jay Smith, Museum Director. “We are delighted that AASLH recognized the quality of *Our South Dakota* through a Leadership in History Award.”

This year, AASLH is proud to confer 59 national awards honoring people, projects, exhibits, books and organizations. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership for the future of state and local history.

Presentation of the awards will be made at a special banquet during the 2012 AASLH Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Friday, Oct. 5. The banquet is supported by a generous contribution from the History Channel.

The museum in the Cultural Heritage Center is open 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. CDT Monday-Saturday and 1-4:30 p.m. Sundays and most holidays. There is a small admission fee for ages 18-and-older. For more information, call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov/museum.

The AASLH awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards not only honor significant achievement in the field of state and local history, but also brings public recognition of the opportunities for small and large organizations, institutions, and programs to make contributions in this arena. For more information about the Leadership in History Awards or AASLH, based in Nashville, Tenn., call (615) 320-3203, or go to www.aaslh.org.

Editor's Note: Possible cutline – A full-size mammoth, bison, antelope, coyote and prairie dog allow visitors to see how they “measure up” in the *Our South Dakota* exhibit. (Photo courtesy South Dakota State Historical Society)

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The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.